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REMARKS

In the October 20, 2004 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-26, 28, 30, and 32 pending in the application. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, Applicants amend claims 1, 8, 13, and 20. Support for the amended claims may be found in the originally filed specification, and thus, no new matter is added by this amendment. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1-26, 28, 30, and 32 (4 independent claims; 29 total claims) remain pending in the application. Applicants request reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-26, 28, 30, and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Taufique (WO 01/20518 A1), in view of Lauffer, U.S. Patent No. 6,223,165, issued April 24, 2001 (hereinafter "Lauffer"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections and provide the following arguments in support.

Taufique is limited to a system and method for providing communications between an expert and an end user seeking an answer to an end user's questions. In response to end user questions, the expert transmits an expert answer to the end user. The system provides for a database for storing information relating to a plurality of experts and for storing the transmitted expert answer.

Lauffer is limited to a system for delivering advice to consumers via a server unit that stores and displays the names and characteristics of experts and then assists in connecting the expert and consumer for real-time communication. The server unit also has the ability to receive keywords from the consumer, match those keywords to one or more experts, and then tell the consumer how to contact an expert. The Lauffer system also includes a visual display of available experts that may be presented to consumers (col. 6, line 30 - col. 7, line 67). In addition, Lauffer teaches having the consumer compensate the expert, either directly or indirectly (col. 8, lines 1-53). In all embodiments disclosed by Lauffer, the consumer and expert establish a connection wherein the consumer and expert communicate interactively with each other (e.g., see col. 8, line 56 - col. 9, line 22).

The combination of Taufique and Lauffer teaches away from the presently claimed invention by providing for a system that has the consumer and expert set up an interactive communication connection, whereby the expert answers the consumer's questions in an

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interactive fashion and an answer is not automatically retrieved from an answer database. In addition, the combination of Taufique and Lauffer teaches away from the presently claimed invention by providing for a system that has the consumer and expert set up an interactive communication connection whereby the consumer submits a question to a database, receives an answer, and the issue is resolved. Neither Taufique or Lauffer teach or suggest a system wherein the destination expert interactively processes travel reservation requests.

Taufique and Lauffer teach a system wherein an expert, in an interactive session, provides an answer to questions from consumers. In contrast, independent claims 1, 8, 13, and 20 recite "automatically retrieving from the answer database, without intervention by the destination expert, an answer to the customer request" and "enabling an interactive session between the destination expert and the customer to facilitate the destination expert interactively processing travel reservation requests from the customer", which is different from interactively answering questions from consumers.

Accordingly, the combination of Taufique and Lauffer does not render amended independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20 obvious. Claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, 21-26, 28, 30 and 32 each variously depend from independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20, and contain all of the elements thereof. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, 21-26, 28, 30 and 32 are not obvious in light of Taufique and Lauffer at least for the same reasons as independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20, in addition to their own respective features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-26, 28, 30, and 32.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims fully comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are allowable over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all pending claims is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

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